From Romanism to Evangelical Christianity

Bisceglia

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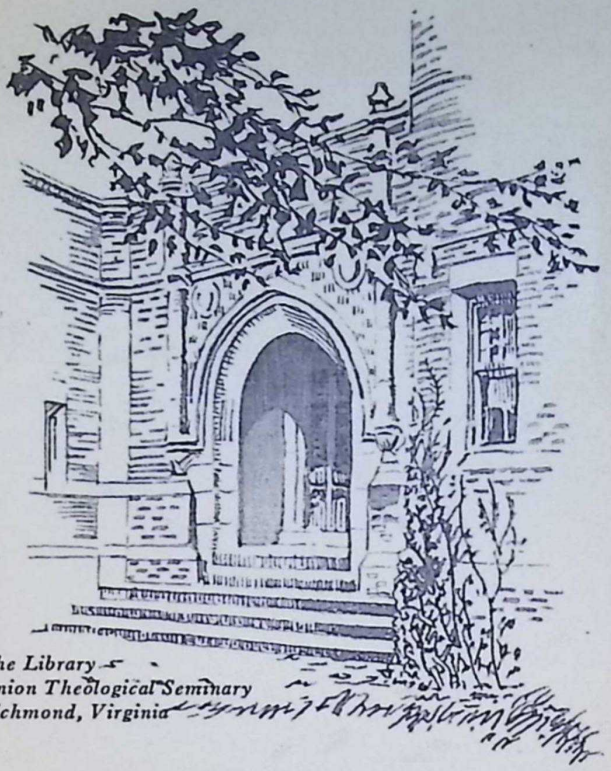

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From

ROMANISM

To

EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY

By

J. B. BISCEGLIA

This paper was read by Dr. Bisceglia on April 16, 1945, to a meeting of Alpha Tau Epsilon, an organization of Presbyterian ministers in Kansas City. It was considered by them to be of such timely significance, scholarly excellence, and evangelical value that copies were desired for circulation in answer to the many questions on these matters which frequently arisc. The members of the group are immensely grateful to Dr. Bisceglia for this intimate record of his spiritual pilgrimage and for the fruitful Christian testimony of his life among us.

R. PARK JOHNSON, Pastor
Second Presbyterian Church,
President, ATE, 1944-45.

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From Romanism To Evangelical Christianity

Last October I received a letter from a prominent young minister in Alabama, asking me to answer by special delivery air mail, a number of questions on Romanism for an address he was to give that following Monday before the Presbyterian ministers of his city. Briefly, the questions were as follows: "Are Roman Catholics permitted to read the Bible? Were they denied this privilege at any time? Is Romanism expressed in one word, 'authority'? What is the number of Roman Catholics in the United States of America? In the world? What should be our attitude toward Roman Catholics? Discuss briefly the confessional, penance, indulgences, mariolatry, celibacy, and any other subject pertinent to the situation today." This letter came in the Wednesday mail and he expected an answer before Sunday. The reason I mention this incident is that many ministers have received very little training in this most important subject. I believe our Seminaries should offer definite courses on Romanism and the Bible, and every minister should be conversant not only with Roman Catholic doctrines, but with the aims of Romanism in America and in the world; for I am firmly convinced that the real battle will not be between Christianity and Communism, but between Evangelical Christianity and Romanism; and the battle field may well be the United States of America.

I was born and reared a Roman Catholic. My parents descended from profoundly religious people. This is attested by the fact my mother's only paternal uncle was a priest, while my father pointed with some pride to a Monsignor in his immediate family, and one of his brothers became a lay friar in his later life. We were in good standing with the Church, my training and background were those of the average Roman Catholic boy reared in a strong Roman Catholic town, and in what is supposed to be the most Roman Catholic country in the world. My attitude toward Roman Catholics, therefore, is one of love and sympathic understanding.

It is very difficult for anyone with such a background to give an intimate account of the struggle of his own soul as a noble adventure from Romanism to Evangelical Christianity, for it is not easy to describe how one must give up a religion and practices which had been held sacred for generations; the sacrifices involved in such an adventure; the intellectual adjustments, the social ostracism, the personal misunderstandings, and the financial losses, except in the spirit of the Apostle Paul when he said, "For what things were gain to me I counted loss for Jesus Christ."

With your kind indulgence, I shall divide this struggle into three parts: the Intellectual and Patriotic, since it began and acquired momentum as I made progress in my studies in high school in Italy and then in college and university in America; the Ethical, which was quickened as my soul became cleansed in the fires of experience and my conscience became more sensitive in contact with the Christian American way of life; and finally, the Spiritual, as I became saturated with the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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The Intellectual and Patriotic Struggle

I was a child of the Political Renaissance in Italy. Liberal teachers had fired my imagination with the names of Cavour, Mazzini and Garibaldi, who had liberated Italy from the enemy, had united seven small states into a comparatively strong nation, and in 1870, taking advantage of the war between France and Prussia, conquered Rome as Pius IX cried, "Non possumus" to an ultimatum to surrender, and made the historic capital of the Roman empire the new capital of united Italy. Liberal poets from Dante to Carducci enriched my mind with their songs on Italy's heroes, stirred me with their invectives against the papacy, and inspired my future hopes and aspirations for the fatherland. It was natural, therefore, for me as a high school student to be concerned about the political intrigues and aspirations of the Roman Catholic Church.

ITALY AND THE VATICAN

Anyone familiar with the history of Italy and her relationships with the Vatican will recall the struggle of the patriots to free and unify the country, since a paganized papacy had followed the old Roman maxim, "divide and rule." In fact the Pope, in order to keep his temporal power, called on outside powers forty-two times to fight against the Italians and keep them away from their goal. Even after Rome had been conquered, and the Italian government had established itself in the eternal city, the Pope had never forgiven Italy. He preferred to live in complete segregation in his Vatican palaces and call himself the prisoner of St. Peter. Many Catholics believed the poor Pope lived in a cell when actually he had eleven thousand rooms at his disposal. He banned the display of the Italian flag from all the Catholic churches in the Kingdom; he made it clear he had not given up his claim to temporal power, and plotted continually for his return to power against the interests of Italy. It was natural from a historical standpoint to feel resentment for this attitude of the Roman Church toward the Italian nation.

Here, of course, some will raise the old question—if that is the case why do most Italians, including the ruling family, remain in the Roman Catholic Church? Why don't they break away from the Roman Church as a nation, as did England and other European countries on the continent, which for political reasons, accentuated by the religious question, broke away from Rome? The relationship in Italy was different. The Vatican, with all its tentacles reaching the remotest parts of the world, has its headquarters in the heart of Italy. An army of Jesuits and priests, monks and nuns, highly organized, is always ready to crush any antagonism against the Pope. But there was another reason. They had cunningly spread this bit of propaganda, well founded, of course, that since at one time Rome ruled the world politically, when the greatest honor was to be a Roman citizen; now that Rome no longer rules the world with the sword, why not let her rule the world with spiritual power? It was not considered unpatriotic, therefore, to be an infidel; but it was unpatriotic to break away from the organized Church.

THE TEMPORAL POWER OF THE POPES

That her ambition for temporal power had never been given up by the Roman Church was made very clear when Fascism went to power, and Mussolini, in order to secure the support of the Roman Catholic Church

for his dream of reviving the glory that was once Rome, undertook the task of solving the famous Roman question. Accordingly, on June 7, 1929, he announced to the world with his own showmanship that he was ready to cut the Gordian knot and give peace to the spiritual and political powers in Italy by publicizing the famous, or infamous Lateran Treaty. This gave the Pope a small geographical area, only a slice of the old city of Rome, with a total area of sixteen square miles, and a population in 1932 of one thousand and twenty-five; the restitution to the Roman Church of some properties the Italian government had confiscated after the fall of the temporal power; a payment in gold of one billion lire, and an annual taxation of millions for a period of years. This taxation was imposed by the holy father, rich and well-fed, on his dear children, who had been from time immemorial, poor and hungry.

Now the Vatican State would be most insignificant, or as nearly as possible, a geographical expression, less important than the Republic of San Marino nestled in the mountains of Italy with a standing army of sixty men, were it not for the fact the Vatican Government is the brain and the heart of a vast army of millions of well-trained men and women, whose ramifications reach the ends of the earth, who in turn claim obedience from a population variously estimated from over two hundred million to four hundred million, who are in key positions as much as possible in every nation in the world, and whose loyalty is first to the Supreme Pontiff and only second to their respective rulers and governments. At the crowning of a new Pope this formula is repeated: "Receive the Tiara adorned of three crowns, and know that thou art the father of Princes and Kings, the sovereign of the world and the vicar of Jesus Christ." The question which came up in the United States when Alfred Smith was running for President was exactly thus—whether his first allegiance would be to a foreign potentate or to the Constitution of the United States of America. This played an important part in his defeat, and will continue to defeat similar candidates as long as Protestantism remains vigilant and marches on to conquer America for Christ.

ROME NEVER CHANGES

The story is told of the married French Cardinal, Talleyrand, who was standing one day by a window, watching the people in a revolt milling about in the streets below. He remarked to one of his "hangers-on": "I see our side is winning." His satellite asked him: "Which is our side?" Talleyrand replied, "I don't know yet—it is the side that is going to win." This story is a good sample of the opportunism of the Roman Church everywhere. Anyone who would like to know if the Vatican has changed, or is the same opportunist organization, needs only to take a look at the following dates and relative events to be convinced the Pope has played politics with the enemies of the democracies as long as they had a chance to win this war; but the moment he was fairly sure the fortunes of war were changing, he became a friend of the Allies and he is trying to secure all the advantages he can from them.

"It is absolutely unlawful," Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical Libertas, declared, "to demand, to defend, or to grant unconditional freedom of thought, of speech, of writing, of worship"; and only last Christmas eve, the present Pope Pius XII approvingly quoted from this very encyclical.

Do not overlook the fact that the countries on the side of Hitler, fighting the world democracies, were Catholic countries—headed by Roman

Catholic rulers; such as Franco in Spain, Salazar in Portugal, Mussolini in Italy, Pavelitch in Croatia, Msgr. Tiso in Slovakia, Petain and Laval in Fascist France. In Germany itself, Adolph Hitler, on the opening page of the German Who's Who (Wer Ist's?) is listed as a Roman Catholic. Goebbels, Nazi Minister of Propaganda, was also a Catholic. So too, were the following leaders of Nazism: Franz von Papen, ace diplomat; Syess-Inquart, betrayer of Austria; Henlein, Fuehrer of Sudentenland, and many others. In July, 1944, when von Papen became papal chamberlain he declared: "The third reich is the first power in the world not only to recognize, but to translate into practice the high principles of the Vatican." In August, 1938, Pius XI sent his apostolic blessing to Franco for saving the Roman Church in Spain. In 1926 Pius XI had called Mussolini "The man sent by Providence," and when the Black Shirts left Rome to invade Abyssinia, they received the blessing of the holy father, and in return Protestant missionaries were sent out of Ethiopia while Roman Catholics marched in.

It would be a shrewd political movement to make Archbishop Spellman of New York a temporary papal Secretary of State, or personal envoy extraordinary, to represent the Pope at the peace conference. He has been heralded as a friend of the democracies and has been glamorized with the GI's in his well-publicized visits. He is free from the entanglements of the Italian papal Secretary of State, and he has the advantage of being an American with all the political prestige the Roman Church is exercising in this country. We had better watch the Roman Church at the Peace Conference!

If the Vatican State remained a geographical expression, although we would have moral and spiritual reasons to oppose it, yet we would refrain from exposing it politically and historically, since it would make very little difference in the balance of world powers; but as we have demonstrated, the Vatican City is the headquarters of an octopus extending its tentacles in every direction and reaching every capital in the world, including Tokyo and Washington; and when the representatives of victorious and defeated nations shall sit around the peace table; this seemingly insignificant State will be better represented than any nation in the world. It will play a very important, perhaps a dominant part in deciding the future of the world and of unborn generations. Protestantism with at least an equal number of members in the world, will either not be represented at all, or if it gains representation, its voice will be weak, hesitant, and will not be heeded. The only hope of salvation in this situation seems to come from Russia, for we have all read what the metropolitan of the Greek Orthodox Church said some time ago, that if Rome is represented, the Greek Orthodox Church must also be represented, and so should Protestantism.

The Moral Issue

I have touched on the Intellectual-Political issue and now pass on to the more cogent and compelling moral issues. Any student of history who approaches the question objectively will be impressed by the high degree of corruption in the Roman Catholic Church. My soul was seared as I read of the Inquisition and of the corruption of many Popes. It reached the climax in the Borgias with Pope Alexander VI and his son Caesar,

who vied with each other in iniquity. Later I read how Roman Catholic historians admitted the guilt, but excused the culprits by saying they were the products of their times and environment. Naturally my mind and heart were not satisfied with this explanation, for I felt I could very well concur with the judgment of these historians if they tried to excuse a corrupted bishop or an evil cardinal; but the Pope, who is at the head of the Roman Catholic Church, who claims to be the vicar of Christ on earth, who is called "Holy Father," and who claims, according to the dogma of 1870 that he is infallible when he speaks ex cathedra on dogma and morals, is a different story. How an immoral person could be infallible on moral questions was beyond my comprehension.

CORRUPTION IN THE CHURCH

The corruption of priests and monks is so notorious in strong Roman Catholic countries like France, Italy, Spain and Mexico, and is so well known to every student of the religious movement in the world that we need not dwell on it here. Priests in my home town had housekeepers, who, for all intent and purpose, were their wives; children were born who were known as nephews. My mother's uncle, the priest, left two children when he died; but he was at least scrupulous enough to bequeath all he had for the care of his children.

Romanists are under the impression their priests take three vows: obedience, poverty and chastity; but contrary to public opinion, very few priests take the vow of chastity, although they submit to celibacy. Those of us acquainted with the priesthood, especially in Roman Catholic countries, know too well their reaction to celibacy, for if they do not rebel openly they act secretly. You see, most of them were "forced" into the priesthood by their parents for social and economic advantages, and their vows did not affect them until later when it was impossible to do anything about it. Of course, we would have no argument against anyone who feels by natural inclinations that he does not want to burden himself with a wife and family, in order to give himself more fully to the work of God. This is a noble sacrifice if it is done in good faith and kept as such before God; but when an organization like the Church makes it obligatory upon all priests, monks and nuns to take this vow, irrespective of natural tendencies, we rebel because it is first of all unscriptural; and second, it is abhorrent to nature. This is the reason why many priests in Italy abandoned the priesthood, had their perpetua (perpetual servant) or sought paramours. In my search I soon discovered that Jesus performed a miracle in relieving Peter's mother-in-law of her fever; and if Peter, who they say was the first Pope, had a mother-in-law, it is conclusive that he had a wife. Paul advised the bishop among other things "to be the husband of one wife." Most of the Church fathers were married, and up to 1079 celibacy had not been made a requirement of the Church.

We could go on ad libitum if we had a desire to expose the Roman Church clergy; but this is just to show you what takes place in the mind of a Roman Catholic youth in a Roman Catholic country, and what is to be expected in America if and when, God forbid, Romanism will be in the majority.

Roman Catholic apologists at first deny all these things; but when they are confronted with facts and figures, names and dates, and the

evidence is overwhelming, they admit the guilt; but they try to excuse the culprits by saying the spirit is strong, but the flesh is weak; and after all they have all the human frailties of the rest of us. This we would readily accept if individuals and not the Church were directly responsible for such conditions; but since the Church insists on the celibacy of priests, monks and nuns, even when she knows from long and painful experience many of them cannot keep such a vow, it becomes a different story. If celibacy were voluntary, although not scriptural, many might feel they would want to remain single in order to come and go as the spirit moves them.

How else can one deal sympathetically with home and family problems if one does not have a family of his own? I am reminded of the Roman Catholic priest who was exalting the virtues of the home life and urging the wives to submit without questioning to their husbands. The woman who had left a drunken husband shouting at home and came to church in order to find rest and escape, murmured as she came out, "I wish I knew as little as he does about it."

In this connection I began to question very early another teaching of the Roman Catholic Church—that a priest may be a criminal; but when he performs his duties he is a channel of grace. Here we are no longer dealing with an individual priest going wrong as an individual minister of the Gospel may go wrong; but we are before a well-organized Church which seems to condone or even encourage wrong-doing; whereas my Christ says, "By their fruits ye shall know them," and it is not the outside which matters; but the inside which determines the validity of apostleship.

MIXED MARRIAGES

Gradually I learned that marriage is not a sacrament, since it was not instituted by Christ; but rather by God Himself in the Garden, when he performed the first marriage of Adam and Eve. The Roman Catholic Church holds only one marriage valid, the one performed by the priest. You and I, according to their teachings, are living in legalized concubinage, and your children and mine are illegitimate. This is a terrifying teaching for a young man or woman who wishes to marry outside the Roman Church, and to the old parents of both sides.

I try to discourage mixed marriages; but when, as you know from personal experience, two fall in love, there is no power in the world, as a rule, to keep them apart. Therefore, ministers and priests working in mixed communities face this problem continually. In my twenty-seven years in the ministry I have had to perform quite a number of mixed marriages, and be it said to the credit of the members of the Mission, in all these marriages we lost only one to Romanism; but we gained all the rest, because the member of the Mission, whether male or female, tries to win the other party to Christ. Notwithstanding the fact Roman Catholic priests exact from the Protestant a written promise that the children born from this union shall be baptized and reared in the Roman Catholic Church; and through the confessional they instigate the other party to bring "the heretic" into the fold. I make only one request from the Roman Catholic, that he or she will read the Bible and attend services at the Mission, which is purely voluntary, for I have confidence in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the power of God unto salvation to those who believe.

To give you some idea to what extremes they go in my community let me give you a recent illustration. Last fall a member of my congregation came home on furlough and was united in marriage at the Mission to his Roman Catholic sweetheart. (By the way, the marriage always is an elaborate affair, and I must preach a sermon every time.) The following Sunday this item appeared in the Bulletin of the local Roman Church: "Last week a grave scandal occurred in our parish. Since the scandal was public we ask each and every one of our parishioners this morning to make an Act of Reparation and Atonement to the Sacred Heart for the grave sin of Apostasy and pray the Blessed Virgin will cause that person to repent and return to the Faith." The young bride called the priest and asked for an explanation. He admitted it was meant for her. He invited her to come to the parsonage and her answer was, "Gladly, providing my husband may come along." The priest refused. The young woman is now with her husband, stationed in Arkansas. She is reading the Bible I gave her as a wedding present and is attending a Presbyterian Church. She expects to join our church on confession of faith as soon as she returns home.

THE END JUSTIFIES THE MEANS

Another moral question I had to face very soon was the well-known Jesuit maxim: "The end justifies the means." Briefly it means, as long as you have a lofty goal you may use any means at your disposal which will facilitate the task. Now this is how it works: Take for example, you ask Romanists how they justify the holy inquistion, when men and women were arrested, dragged into prison, tortured, killed, massacred! They will tell you the aim of the inquisitors was to save the souls of heretics or as a salutary example to others. This is what the Roman Church has been doing through the centuries. It has used the most depraved means and the most corrupting influence in order to achieve a certain goal, which in their own estimation is high and praise-worthy. That is how they justify the burning alive of Bruno, Savonarola, Huss; the killing of four thousand French people in one night, known as the night of St. Bartholomew; the destruction of the Waldensians which provoked Milton to write a famous sonnet beginning with the words, "Avenge, O Lord, thy saints of old." This is how they justify their bingo games, the selling of beer and wine on Sunday afternoon and evening in their parochial schools or church basements. This is how they justify their carnivals when they gamble openly and sell all sorts of beverages. Their aim is to raise money with which to save souls or give instruction to children, build schools or churches, community centers and programs. Therefore their means are justified.

THE CONFESSIONAL

My inquiring mind soon discovered from the conversation of my elders, as well as from well-known historical cases, that confession was the most corrupting influence in the Roman Church. This, of course, has nothing to do with the type of confession advocated by Evangelical Christians nor with the catharsis of Psychiatrists. This is what I mean: Under the title, "Is the Catholic Confessional a Cause of Crime?" Ex-priest Joseph Zacchello attributes the higher percentage of crimes among Romanists from the cradle to the grave, to the Confessional. He says: "Canon 888 says the priest has to remember that in hearing confessions he is a judge. Again, Canon 872 says for the hearing of confession there is required in the priest

not only the power of orders (the priesthood) but also a juridicial investment. As to the power of the priest as judge in confession, Canon 870 says, in the confessional the minister has the power to forgive all crimes committed after baptism."

"Anyone can understand this practice of the Catholic Confession is no deterrent to crime, and in fact, can easily be made an excuse for continuing in it. Big time criminals and racketeers, especially, generally can find ways to circumvent the civil law and its penalties. If they are Roman Catholics and believe in confession, they have assurance of an easy way of also escaping punishment in the next life."

An "indulgence" as defined by Webster, is "remission of the temporal punishment due to sins, after the guilt of sin has been remitted by repentance; absolution from the censures and public penances of the Church." The Roman Church teaches two things shut men out from the kingdom of heaven—their guilt and the temporal punishment of that guilt. The former may be removed; but the latter still exists, and must be removed by "Indulgence." This teaching is not Scriptural. The Bible teaches that when God, because of our faith in Christ's atonement, forgives our sins, we are thereby received into the fullness of divine favor, into the kingdom of heaven. "Indulgences" are immensely profitable to the Church, and the sale of them was one of the abuses which made the Reformation necessary.

When Tetzel was selling indulgences in Germany, a brigand who had heard of the extravagant promises made by the friars, conferred with one of them. After ascertaining this indulgence covered not only past and present sins, but the future as well, he decided to pay the very large sum requested. After reading his certificate of perpetual amnesty he folded it, placed it in the pocket next to his heart, and left to continue his nefarious business. This was not the end of the story, however, for having been informed the monks had to pass by a dense forest in their itinerary for the sale of indulgences, the brigand met them at the cross road and shouted: "Your purse or your life," "You wretched man," shouted the friar, who was at the head of the group, "the greatest excommunication and the flames of hell await you for this sacrilege." The very logical brigand exclaimed, "I am not afraid of your hell, since I have in my pocket the document you sold me, insuring my forgiveness for every crime past, present and future." And taking all the money, he left the friars to meditate on the value of their indulgences.

We could go on multiplying examples until we would be completely disgusted, or at least temporarily aroused; but there were more important things that spurred me on in my search for truth.

The Doctrinal Reasons

To present adequately the doctrinal reasons why I left the Roman Church would require a volume; but for our purpose I shall examine only those which are in sharper contrast with the Bible.

THE INFALLIBILITY OF THE POPES

First of all I was amazed at the doctrine of the infallibility of the Pope which became a dogma of the Church in 1870, for which there is no ground in history, in the Bible or in reason. Pius IX, among other heresies, made

St. Joseph patron Saint of the Roman Catholic Church, proclaimed the immaculate conception of Mary, and declared the infallibility of the Popes in these words: "With the approval of the sacred college, we teach and define to be a dogma, revealed from God, that the Roman Pointiff when he speaks "ex catedra," i.e., when he functions as pastor and doctor of all Christians, he is the possessor of that infallibility of which the divine Redeemer wanted the Church to be instructed concerning faith and morals."

When we turn to Paul's epistles to the Romans we read in chapter 3, verse 4: "God forbid, yea, let God be true; but every man a liar; as it is written that thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged." Here Paul says that every man is a liar. Is the Pope a man or not? If he is a man, then he can not be infallible. The doctrine of the infallibility of the Popes was made retroactive. Now according to Romanist claims, St. Peter was the first Pope; but we read that the Apostle Paul reproved the Apostle Peter in Galatians 2:14: "But when I saw they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, if thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?" Would anyone dare say the words of Paul are not inspired when he accuses Peter of a grave sin? Must we still believe in the infallibility of Peter? Let us read verse 11: "But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face because he was to be blamed." We could propound many historical questions, as for example, Who was infallible, the Pope who condemned Joan of Arc or the one who canonized her?

Once my curiosity was aroused, I soon discovered what I had not questioned before, that the Pope had arrogated for himself all the prerogatives of Christ by making himself the vice-regent of God and the vicar of Jesus Christ. In fact, the Pope declares himself superior to God, for he claims the power of permitting what God has forbidden and of forgiving what God has condemned.

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF MARY

As I began to read the Bible I was surprised to find no evidence for the tenet of the immaculate conception of Mary in which they teach that Mary was conceived and was born without original sin. They go a step further and teach the ascension of Mary; but they reach the absurd when they teach to pray, "Hail Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners." There is a member of my church whose name is Salvatrice which means a "female saviour." Yet as late as the 13th Century St. Thomas of Aquinas explicitly taught in his "Summa" that the doctrine of the immaculate conception of the virgin Mary was not revealed and could not be true.

In Roman Catholic rituals and practice the worship of the virgin Mary takes the place virtually of the worship of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Mary is constantly referred to as the "mother of God." Over and over, with almost endless repetition, the first prayer I learned at my mother's knees was, "Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners." Therefore, Mary is made to usurp the place of Christ as intercessor and mediator. Her image is seen everywhere, and untold myriads bow before it with reverence. Later I learned that the Protestants, of course, honor the virgin Mary, and bless her memory; but we find absolutely no warrant in Scripture for worshipping her, and regard such worship as idolatry.

In his book, Saint Alfonso De'Liguori, gives several anecdotes showing that whoever invokes the Virgin Mary, even though he be a great and stubborn sinner, will be saved. I will relate only two stories: An assassin from Normandy had been beheaded; but his head, after being separated from his body, began to cry in a loud voice: "Virgin Mary, grant me the confession!" That head did not cease to cry out until a priest went and received its confession. Mary, Saint Alfonso De'Liguori remarks, granted this special favor in spite of the fact the assassin had been a thief and a murderer, simply because he used to fast in her honor every Saturday.

Another anecdote related by the same saint is this: Once a priest, while reciting and singing praises to Mary, fell into the river Seine and was drowned. The unfortunate priest was under mortal sin, and devils ran to carry him into hell. Priest and devils were on the point of entering the gates of hell when Mary appeared, and with an almighty voice said to the devils: "Why do you dare to carry this man into hell when he died praising me? Set him free!" Then she said to the dead priest: "I say unto thee, arise and be faithful by preaching the truth of my immaculate conception!" The devils were compelled to set the priest free, and he arose up to physical life.

THE EUCHARIST

The next doctrine which challenged my mind and heart was the materialistic doctrine of the Eucharist. As you know, the celebration of the mass according to the Catholic Church, is a re-enactment of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. When the priest pronounces the sacramental words, "Hoc est corpus meum," the wafer is changed into the flesh, blood, bones and nerves of our Lord Jesus Christ. They base this claim on the words of our Lord, "This is my body, take, eat all of it." Naturally, they forget that Christ was sitting with His disciples when He said "this is my body," and they pay no attention to the fact the sacrifice had not yet been consumated; that the wafer (Hosta) is of pagan origin, nor their inconsistency in depriving the laity of the wine, for although the priest still says, "take, eat," he places the particle on the tongue; he says, "take, drink"; but drinks the wine himself. They persist in their claim of the dogma of transubstantiation in the face of the growing testimony of actual events, when a sexton, who in order to avenge the honor of a daughter, wife or sister, has added poison in the chalice and the priest falls dead on the altar. Many amusing happenings are recounted by Roman Catholics. Take, for example, this incident of the one serving the mass who had a grievance against a priest. When they reached the point in the mass in which the priest chants, "This is wine and becomes the blood of our Lord," the response was, "Vinegar it is, and vinegar it will remain!" The priest, forgetting the solemn moment, and knowing no one present would know the difference, retorted in Latin, "Wait until I get you in the vestry," to which the assistant cried, "You will not catch me there."

Aside from the amusing or tragic incidents, the sacrament of the mass is of pagan origin, and if we accept their claims at their face value, they make cannibals of all their participants.

The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) derives its importance not only because it gave concrete existence to the Inquisition, but also because it decreed as tenets of Catholic faith the Confession and the theory of Transubstantiation.

DIFFERENT KINDS OF MASSES

I am sure I do not exaggerate when I say that for many Catholics, and for all non-Catholics, there are but two types of masses, and the two are more or less the same in substance. The student of Romanism, however, soon discovers there are several kinds of masses with sharp and conflicting differences. Let me give the most important.

Dry Masses.—There is a so-called "dry mass" in which the priest repeats only the liturgical part without the administration of holy communion. This to us seems a nonsense; but to the Roman Catholic Church, so adapted to find reasons or excuses for everything, this becomes a convenient way to enable a lonely priest, away from other inhabitants or in a community where there are no Romanists, to celebrate mass.

Private Masses.—Then there are six kinds of private masses in which the priest goes through the complete procedure, repeats the words of our Lord, "Take, eat all of it"; but he is the only one to participate of the elements employed in the sacrament. This to us seems to be a falsehood perpetrated on the altar for which, even the Roman theologians, past masters in sophistry, cannot find a satisfactory way out.

These private masses remind us of the story we have heard of a poor man who went into a restaurant in Italy, and having nothing to eat but a loaf of dry bread, he asked the owner if he might eat near where the meat was broiled so that from the odor he might receive the illusion of a good meal. As soon as he finished, however, the owner wanted to charge him fifty cents, and of course an argument followed. A policeman was called who, upon hearing the arguments from both sides, took a fifty cent piece from his pocket, pretended to give it to the owner; dropped it on the table and then retrieved his coin and placed it back in his pocket. The owner protested and the policeman informed him he had given him the fifty cents, whereupon the owner retorted he had heard only the sound of money. The policeman then informed him that precisely in the same manner, the man had not eaten the meat; but had just participated in the odor, as he had in the sound of the coin.

Low and High Masses.—These two types of masses are determined by the cost, by the number of participants, the vestments, the amount of light, etc.

Masses are celebrated in honor of saints, and there are several categories, depending upon the degree of respect enjoyed by the particular saint in this man-made heaven. Here Christ is sacrificed to the saint and since Christ is God, God prays to the saint. How can such a thing be possible? This, however, is not the climax of their simony; for masses are said for the sick and the dying, to vouchsafe the journey of those who travel by land and sea, for soldiers engaged to kill innocent victims, and what is more abhorrent to all Christians, is the fact masses are actually offered for the sick cow and for the dying donkey. Therefore, God is sacrificed to animals!

INCORRECT

PURGATORY

Next to the mass I soon found myself at the antipodes with the doctrine of the purgatory. This, as you know, was described by Plato (425 B. C.) and was officially adopted by the Roman Church in 1439. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that instead of having two places to which the

soul of the departed may go—clearly stated in the New Testament, heaven and hell—they add two other places, the limbo, to which they relegate children who have not been baptized, as well as philosophers and poets who lived before Christ, and the purgatory. We will not say very much about the limbo, although it is most inhuman to condemn innocent children for eternity simply because their parents failed to baptize them, whereas Jesus took upon His knees children who had not been baptized and said, "Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." Our purpose is to deal with purgatory.

According to Roman Catholic teachings, purgatory is a place where those whose goodness is not great enough for heaven, and whose sins are not great enough for hell, expect to be confined until they can be purged of all penalties and be admitted into heaven. The spectre of purgatory, a thousand times hotter than hell itself, is bad enough; but in advocating that man can redeem man, since the soul in purgatory can be helped only by priests offering masses, and through the intercession of the Virgin Mary and other saints, it destroys the work of Christ. Because if it is true the blood of Christ shed for us on the cross, washes us from all our sins; and if the words of Christ are true that "he who believes in me is saved and he who does not believe in me is already condemned"; and if the parable of the rich man and Lazarus and all the other related teachings of Christ are true; and if there is no condemnation for those who are in Jesus Christ (Roman 8:1); then either Christ has the power to save or His sacrifice is useless.

The real reason for the creation of purgatory, as one may easily see, was purely financial. The Roman Catholic Church provides that the chief means of being released from purgatory is through the payment of masses. Very often we read people leave thousands of dollars for masses to be said for the refreshment of souls in purgatory and for the final release from this place of suffering. Visit an undertaker in my community where they still have the old-fashioned Irish wakes, and you will be surprised to find letters neatly arranged in the casket, often all over the corpse; and upon inquiry you will discover these are spiritual bouquets. Each one is good for one or more masses, from a few dollars to hundreds of dollars, all depending upon the popularity of the family, for it is just like some people do at Christmas time: "We must give them a present because they gave us one last year!"

Recently a very enterprising Canadian Bishop issued a pastoral letter in which he urged mothers of boys in the service to pay $40.00 in anticipation of the death of their boys as an assurance for the salvation of their souls. He told these mothers if they were poor to deprive themselves of something essential to their well-being and to pay it on the installment plan, say $2.00 a month.

It would be intriguing to find out from our Catholic friends if they know how many masses are required to assure their loved ones safe passage from purgatory to heaven. How do they determine the time? A story circulated in Italy about several brothers who, before coming to the United States visited their priest, greatly concerned about the soul of their father. The priest assured them he had made good progress, and they tried to make a bargain with him for a lump sum. The priest to facilitate the bargain in his favor, sent his maidservant downstairs to get some of his good, old wine; and presenting a glass to each son, held his own before the light and began to praise the virtues of the wine. In his en-

thusiasm he said: "This is the kind of wine your father drinks in purgatory." The brothers looked at each other and the eldest spoke, "If this is the kind of wine father drinks in purgatory, remembering how fond he was of good wine, we better leave him there, for he may not be able to find the same good wine in heaven." These and many other stories would be highly amusing if they were not profoundly tragic, because we are dealing with immortal souls, with eternal life in the balance. I was a bit naive when I said to a priest, "I don't see how priests, if they actually believe that masses save precious souls from suffering and damnation, would not say masses continually without remuneration until every soul is set free."

AURICULAR CONFESSION

A short time ago I gave you a sample from an ex-priest on the corrupting influence of the sacrament of penance or confession. Let me present it now, as it must be observed by every good Catholic, at least once a year, to receive absolution from the priest in order to participate in the Sacrament of the mass. I was eager to find out if Jesus and his disciples had a confessional which they carried around, and my investigation of the New Testament proved fruitless. I learned furthermore the Bible teaches public and private confession to God, for He alone can forgive sins. Historically the confession to a priest was not instituted until 1215 at the Lateran Council by Pope Innocent III, although it may have been practiced prior to that time. This would be an important aid in the work of the minister if it were practiced as a Catharsis in which a patient unburdens his mind to a sympathetic, intelligent minister; but when every priest, regardless of his intellectual, moral and spiritual qualifications, is empowered to hear confessions, using leading or misleading questions, especially with girls and young women, which are an offense to morality; and when he has the power to pronounce the judgment "ego te absolvo" or refuse to absolve, he makes himself equal or superior to God.

Read this incident from "The Life of Benvenuto Cellini," written by himself: "One day the Pope happened to walk upon the ramparts when he saw me fire a swivel at a Spanish colonel, who had formerly been in his service, and split the man in two. Falling upon my knees, I entreated his holiness to absolve me from the guilt of homicide and other crimes I had committed in the castle in the service of the Church. The Pope, lifting up his hands and making the sign of the cross over me, blessed me and gave his absolution for all the homicides I had ever committed or ever should commit, in the service of the Apostolic Church. After that I kept up a constant fire and scarcely once missed."

THE WORSHIP OF SAINTS

The Roman Church has an imposing array of saints. Their images appear everywhere, in paintings and statues innumerable. To them the faithful are directed to go for relief from all imaginable woes. Miracles are supposed to be worked by their "relics," the authenticity of which—both the miracles and the relics—would not stand a thorough scientific investigation in any case. Immense sums are spent in the adornment of their shrines. The saints, in short, occupy in Roman Catholic practice and teaching a very large share of the place that properly belongs to God in His three persons and to no one else. No one can pray to these saints without a lessening of his faith in God and his trust in Christ as the all sufficient mediator between God and man.

Sometimes the Roman Catholic Church, in order to uphold her doctrines, had to falsify the Scriptures and deceive its own people, as for example, over the worship of images and saints. Apologists makes a fine distinction between the worship of God and the worship of saints; but ninety-nine per cent of the Roman Catholics never make such a distinction, and the Catholic Church in practice does likewise. In my search for truth I discovered the Roman Catholic Church had taught me the ten commandments in the catechism from which the second commandment is completely omitted, and the last commandment is divided into two. Now here you have a case of deception in which to safeguard the making and worshipping of images a commandment is taken out, and since one sin calls for another, they take upon themselves to change the last commandment which is one in content and doctrine, by dividing it into two. This of course provides for an income, and the superstition among homogenious Roman Catholics is so strong that it is almost unbelievable by those who have not been closely associated with them. For example: each town in Italy has a patron saint and, since the priest thrives on celebrations, each extolls the miraculous powers of his particular saint, causing so much rivalry between neighboring towns that at times there is regular warfare with stabbings and shootings. There is enmity among the men of the same parish as to who should have the honor of carrying the saint, and often in their loud arguments they curse the saint, a fight follows, and feuds are created. In America we have had a taste recently of the type of celebrations that take place in small towns in Italy and Mexico. On Saint Joseph's Day, when the priest advertised eleven masses in one morning, the pagan customs were observed; tables covered with food blessed by the priest, costing hundreds of dollars of money begged from door to door, for curious people to go, eat and drink. And on Good Friday evening, with poor artistic taste, they try to re-enact the crucifixion of our Lord, with a procession of chanting women who have been promised if they march in the procession, carrying a candle bought at an exorbitant price from the priest, their boys in the service will receive special protection.

In the town where I was reared, there is a very famous church which dates back to the eleventh century. The people are proud of a very miraculous archangel Michael, a beautiful marble statue with armour, crown and sword, standing on a most frightful lucifer. This saint has two celebrations a year, one in the month of May and the other in September, which attract pilgrims from all over the southern and central parts of Italy. The church is in a grotto below the street surface, hewn deep in the rock, but exposed on one side of the mountain; and the claim is made, which four or five years ago was reported by Ripley of "Believe It or Not" fame in the Kansas City Star, that although water drips from the crevices in the ceiling, no one ever gets wet. My doubts were aroused at an early age when, like many children, I visited the sanctuary frequently during those feast days and felt ice-cold drops of water on my head (which had plenty of hair then). I saw the pilgrims approach the town which is perched on a high pountain. They were barefooted and chanted their ancient songs, beating their breasts and their shoulders with iron chains or stones; and when they reached the entrance of the church, some of them would come down on their hands and knees, and, led by a child or other member of the family, they would lick the dust with their tongues down the ninety steps leading to the sanctuary, until, exhausted, bleeding, faces covered with dirt, they reached the statue in a glass enclosure. Then began the

cries of those who were begging for miracles, each shouting above the other until the place became an infernal babbling of tongues. This was against my tender soul and often I felt like crying. Although many returned disappointed, they had silent evidence of miracles all around the church walls in the forms of hands and feet of wax, crutches and canes, and my childish mind was somewhat appeased.

One day, however, going on an errand for my father at about eight o'clock in the morning, I passed by the church, saw much confusion and some commotion, and filled with curiosity I went in. I learned that thieves had been in during the night. They had removed a large stone from the massive walls on the exposed side of the mountain, had taken some huge stones from the top of the main entrance, and had stolen all the silver of the temple, the costly gold gifts, and precious stones, including the sword and crown studded with pearls, diamonds and rubies. This in a way was "the straw that broke the camel's back," for I said to my parents, "How in the world can anyone believe in a miraculous saint who holds under his feet a very ugly and fearful devil, armed as he is with a sharp sword, but would permit mere men to desecrate his temple and then allow them to take away all the costly gifts that his faithfuls had brought for the celebration." My faith in the supernatural was badly shaken. The struggle for religious freedom in my soul, which started when I was very young, has continued throughout the years.

These facts written in the rush of busy war days are not presented in a belligerent spirit; but in an attitude of humility and love. To me this is not a question of whether one church triumphs over another, or whether Protestantism will defeat Romanism; but whether we possess the truth and are willing to obey God rather than man, since the stakes are heaven and hell, life eternal and eternal damnation. Therefore, it is in the spirit of the Master I come to you and say; If we have something others do not have; if we are really convinced we have the true oracles of God; if we can prove objectively there is only one way of salvation and that is our way, and our Roman Catholic friends have lost the way; then it becomes our sacred duty in loyalty to Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth and the life, and who gave us the great commission to carry the message to those who have it not, to show Him in all sympathy and love. If on the other hand we do not have the only way of salvation, then for the sake not only of truth, but for the sake of our souls, let us rewrite our history, confess the Reformation was a mistake, and that all the martyrs during and after the Reformation died in vain, and their sacrfice was a colossal blunder. Let us recall at once our missionaries from Cuba, Porto Rico, Mexico, South America and the Philippine Islands. Since the Roman Church believes and teaches there is no salvation outside of the Roman Catholic Church, you and I are lost. Let us go like Henry IV to Canossa and stand in penitence until we are admitted. Yes, let us become concerned for the souls of our departed loved ones and purchase their way out of purgatory.

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